

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Applicants submit this Amendment After Final (“Amendment”), together with a Petition for Extension of Time, in reply to the Final Office Action (“Office Action”) mailed December 3, 2003.

In this Amendment, Applicants propose to cancel, without prejudice or disclaimer, claims 35, 41-43, 45, 46, 51, 61, and 71. Applicants also propose to amend claims 31, 47, 57, and 67 to better define the claimed invention. Additionally, Applicants propose to amend claims 50, 54, 60, 64, 70, and 74 to place them in independent form. Further, Applicants propose to amend claims 31, 33, 34, 38, 39, 47, 49, 50, 54, 55, 57, 59, 60, 64, 65, 67, 69, 70, 74, and 75 to improve clarity.

Before entry of this Amendment, claims 31-43 and 45-76 were pending in this application. After entry of this Amendment, claims 31-34, 36-40, 47-50, 52-60, 62-70, and 72-76 are pending in this application.

The originally-filed specification, claims, abstract, and drawings fully support the amendments to claims 31, 33, 34, 38, 39, 47, 49, 50, 54, 55, 57, 59, 60, 64, 65, 67, 69, 70, 74, and 75. No new matter was introduced.

In the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 31-33, 36, 37, 40, 41, 43, and 46 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Japanese Patent Document No. 2-133,206 (“JP ’206”) in view of Japanese Patent Document No. 5-058,109 (“JP ’109”) and U.S. Patent No. 4,350,359 to Van Gompel (“Van Gompel”) and, optionally, U.S. Patent No. 4,424,846 to Seitz et al. (“Seitz”) and/or United Kingdom Patent Document No. 2,114,069 (“GB ’069”); and rejected claims 47-49, 52, 53, 56-59, 62, 63, 66-69, 72, 73, and 76 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as

being unpatentable over JP '206 in view of JP '109 and GB '069 and, optionally, Japanese Patent Document No. 63-116,907 ("JP '907").

The Examiner also allowed claims 34, 35, 38, and 39.

Additionally, the Examiner stated that claims 50, 51, 54, 55, 60, 61, 64, 65, 70, 71, 74, and 75 would be allowable if the claims were rewritten in independent form to include all the recitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Allowable Subject Matter

Applicants gratefully acknowledge the Examiner's statement that claims 34, 35, 38, and 39 are allowed. Additionally, Applicants gratefully acknowledge the Examiner's statement that claims 50, 51, 54, 55, 60, 61, 64, 65, 70, 71, 74, and 75 would be allowable if rewritten.

Claims 50, 60, and 70

Applicants rewrite claims 50, 60, and 70 substantially as suggested by the Examiner. As a result, Applicants submit that claims 50, 60, and 70 are patentable over the cited references for at least the reasons discussed by the Examiner in the Office Action.

Claims 54, 64, and 74

Applicants rewrite claims 54, 64, and 74 substantially as suggested by the Examiner. As a result, Applicants submit that claims 54, 64, and 74 are patentable over the cited references for at least the reasons discussed by the Examiner in the Office Action.

Claims 55, 65, and 75

Claims 55, 65, and 75 depend from allowable claims 54, 64, and 74, respectively. As a result, Applicants submit that claims 55, 65, and 75 are patentable over the cited references for at least the reasons discussed by the Examiner in the Office Action.

Claims 31, 47, 57, and 67

Applicants amend claims 31, 47, 57, and 67 to substantially parallel the subject matter of claims 35, 51, 61, and 71, respectively. As a result, Applicants submit that claims 31, 47, 57, and 67 are patentable over the cited references for at least the reasons discussed by the Examiner in the Office Action.

Claims 32, 33, 36, 37, and 40

Claims 32, 33, 36, 37, and 40 depend directly from allowable claim 31. As a result, Applicants submit that claims 32, 33, 36, 37, and 40 are patentable over the cited references for at least the reasons discussed by the Examiner in the Office Action.

Claims 48, 49, 52, 53, and 56

Claims 48, 49, 52, 53, and 56 depend directly from allowable claim 47. As a result, Applicants submit that claims 48, 49, 52, 53, and 56 are patentable over the cited references for at least the reasons discussed by the Examiner in the Office Action.

Claims 58, 59, 62, 63, and 66

Claims 58, 59, 62, 63, and 66 depend directly from allowable claim 57. As a result, Applicants submit that claims 58, 59, 62, 63, and 66 are patentable over the cited references for at least the reasons discussed by the Examiner in the Office Action.

Claims 68, 69, 72, 73, and 76

Claims 68, 69, 72, 73, and 76 depend directly from allowable claim 67. As a result, Applicants submit that claims 68, 69, 72, 73, and 76 are patentable over the cited references for at least the reasons discussed by the Examiner in the Office Action.

Claim Scope

In discussing the specification, claims, abstract, and drawings in this Amendment, it is to be understood that Applicants are in no way intending to limit the scope of the claims to any exemplary embodiments described in the specification or abstract and/or shown in the drawings. Rather, Applicants believe that Applicants are entitled to have the claims interpreted broadly, to the maximum extent permitted by statute, regulation, and applicable case law.

Summary

In summary, Applicants submit that none of the cited references, including Seitz, Van Gompel, GB '069, JP '109, JP '206, JP '907, and the other art of record, either alone or in any proper combination, teaches or suggests Applicants' claimed invention.

Applicants respectfully request that this Amendment under 37 C.F.R. § 1.116 be entered by the Examiner, placing claims 31-34, 36-40, 47-50, 52-60, 62-70, and 72-76 in condition for allowance. Applicants submit that the proposed amendments to claims 31, 33, 34, 38, 39, 47, 49, 50, 54, 55, 57, 59, 60, 64, 65, 67, 69, 70, 74, and 75 do not raise new issues or necessitate the undertaking of any additional search of the art by the Examiner, because all of the elements and their relationships claimed were either earlier claimed or inherent in the claims as examined. Therefore, this Amendment should allow for immediate action by the Examiner.

It is respectfully submitted that the entering of this Amendment would allow the Applicants to reply to the final rejections and place the application in condition for allowance.

Finally, Applicants submit that the entry of this Amendment would place the application in better form for appeal, should the Examiner dispute the patentability of the pending claims.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants submit that this claimed invention, as amended, is neither anticipated nor rendered obvious in view of the prior art references cited against this application. Applicants therefore request the entry of this Amendment, the Examiner's reconsideration and reexamination of this application, and the timely allowance of the pending claims.

Please grant any extensions of time required to enter this response and charge any additional required fees to our Deposit Account No. 06-0916.

Respectfully submitted,

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Dated: March 17, 2004

By: _____
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